

1KINGS 16: 1 the LORD's word came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying,

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Jehu the prophet denounces the destruction of Baasha, 1Kgs 16:1-7. Zimri conspires against him, and slays him and his family, and reigns seven days, 1Kgs 16:8-15. The people make Omri king, and besiege Zimri in Tirzah; who, finding no way to escape, sets fire to his palace, and consumes himself in it, 1Kgs 16:16-20. The people are divided, half following Tibni, and half Omri; the latter faction overcomes the former, Tibni is slain, and Omri reigns alone, 1Kgs 16:21-23. He founds Samaria, 1Kgs 16:24. His bad character and death, 1Kgs 16:25-28. Ahab reigns in his stead; marries Jezebel, restores idolatry, and exceeds his predecessors in wickedness, 1Kgs 16:29-33. Hiel the Beth-elite rebuilds Jericho, 1Kgs 16:34.

Verse 1

Then the word of the Lord came to Jehu - Of this prophet we know nothing but from this circumstance. It appears from 2Chr 16:7-10, that his father Hanani was also a prophet, and suffered imprisonment in consequence of the faithful discharge of his ministry to Asa.

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1KINGS 16: 2 "Because I exalted you out of the dust, and made you prince over my people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam, and have made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins;

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Verse 2

Made thee prince over my people - That is, in the course of my providence, I suffered thee to become king; for it is impossible that God should make a rebel, a traitor, and a murderer, king over his people, or over any people. God is ever represented in Scripture as doing those things which, in the course of his providence, he permits to be done.

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1KINGS 16: 3 behold, I will utterly sweep away Baasha and his house; and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

1KINGS 16: 4 The dogs will eat Baasha's descendants who die in the city; and he who dies of his in the field the birds of the sky will eat."

1KINGS 16: 5 Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, and what he did, and his might, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

1KINGS 16: 6 Baasha slept with his fathers, and was buried in Tirzah; and Elah his son reigned in his place.

1KINGS 16: 7 Moreover by the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani came the LORD's word against Baasha, and against his house, both because of all the evil that he did in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he struck him.

## Verse 7

And because he killed him - This the Vulgate understands of Jehu the prophet, put to death by Baasha: *Ob hanc causam occidit eum, hoc est. Jehu filium Hanani prophetam*; "On this account he killed him, that is, Jehu the prophet, the son of Hanani." Some think Baasha is intended, others Jeroboam, and others Nadab the son of Jeroboam. This last is the sentiment of Rab. Sol. Jarchi, and of some good critics. The order is here confused; and the seventh verse should probably be placed between the 4th and 5th.

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1KINGS 16: 8 In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Baasha began to reign over Israel in Tirzah for two years.

1KINGS 16: 9 His servant Zimri, captain of half his chariots, conspired against him. Now he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, who was over the household in Tirzah:

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## Verse 9

Captain of half his chariots - It is probable that Zimri, and some other who is not here named, were commanders of the cavalry.

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1KINGS 16: 10 and Zimri went in and struck him, and killed him, in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his place.

1KINGS 16: 11 When he began to reign, as soon as he sat on his throne, he struck all the house of Baasha: he didn't leave him a single one who urinates on a wall, neither of his relatives, nor of his friends.

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## Verse 11

He slew all the house of Baasha - He endeavored to exterminate his race, and blot out his memory; and the Jews say, when such a matter is determined, they not only destroy the house of the person himself, but the five neighboring houses, that the memory of such a person may perish from the earth.

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1KINGS 16: 12 Thus Zimri destroyed all the house of Baasha, according to the LORD's word, which he spoke against Baasha by Jehu the prophet,

1KINGS 16: 13 for all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, which they sinned, and with which they made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities.

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## Verse 13

For all the sins of Baasha - We see why it was that God permitted such judgments to fall on this family. Baasha was a grievous offender, and so also was his son Elah; and they caused the people to sin; and they provoked God to anger by their idolatries.

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1KINGS 16: 14 Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

1KINGS 16: 15 In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah. Now the people were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines.

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#### Verse 15

The people were encamped against Gibbethon - It appears that, at this time, the Israelites had war with the Philistines, and were now besieging Gibbethon, one of their cities. This army, hearing that Zimri had rebelled and killed Elah, made Omri, their general, king, who immediately raised the siege of Gibbethon, and went to attack Zimri in the royal city of Tirzah; who, finding his affairs desperate, chose rather to consume himself in his palace than to fall into the hands of his enemies.

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1KINGS 16: 16 The people who were encamped heard say, Zimri has conspired, and has also struck the king: therefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp.

1KINGS 16: 17 Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah.

1KINGS 16: 18 When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the castle of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died,

1KINGS 16: 19 for his sins which he sinned in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin.

1KINGS 16: 20 Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and his treason that he committed, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

1KINGS 16: 21 Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king; and half followed Omri.

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#### Verse 21

Divided into two parts - Why this division took place we cannot tell; the people appear to have been for Tibni, the army for Omri; and the latter prevailed.

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1KINGS 16: 22 But the people who followed Omri prevailed against the people who followed Tibni the son of Ginath: so Tibni died, and Omri reigned.

1KINGS 16: 23 In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri began to reign over Israel for twelve years. He reigned six years in Tirzah.

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 Verse 23

In the thirty and first year of Asa - There must be a mistake here in the number thirty-one; for, in 1Kgs 16:10 and 1Kgs 16:15, it is said that Zimri slew his master, and began to reign in the twenty-seventh year of Asa; and as Zimri reigned only seven days, and Omri immediately succeeded him, this could not be in the thirty-first, but in the twenty-seventh year of Asa, as related above. Rab. Sol. Jarchi reconciles the two places thus: "The division of the kingdom between Tibni and Omri began in the twenty-seventh year of Asa; this division lasted five years, during which Omri had but a share of the kingdom. Tibni dying, Omri came into the possession of the whole kingdom, which he held seven years; this was in the thirty-first year of Asa. Seven years he reigned alone; five years he reigned over part of Israel; twelve years in the whole. The two dates, the twenty-seventh and thirty-first of Asa, answering, the first to the beginning of the division, the second to the sole reign of Omri." Jarchi quotes Sedar Olam for this solution.

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1KINGS 16: 24 He bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver; and he built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill, Samaria.

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 Verse 24

He bought the hill Samaria of Shemer - This should be read, "He bought the hill of Shomeron from Shomer, and called it Shomeron, (i.e., Little Shomer), after the name of Shomer, owner of the hill." At first the kings of Israel dwelt at Shechem, and then at Tirzah; but this place having suffered much in the civil broils, and the place having been burnt down by Zimri, Omri purposed to found a new city, to which he might transfer the seat of government. He fixed on a hill that belonged to a person of the name of Shomer; and bought it from him for two talents of silver, about 707 3s. 9d. Though this was a large sum in those days, yet we cannot suppose that the hill was very large which was purchased for so little; and probably no other building upon it than Shomer's house, if indeed he had one there. Shomeron, or, as it is corruptly written, Samaria, is situated in the midst of the tribe of Ephraim, not very far from the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and about midway between Dan and Beer-sheba: thus Samaria became the capital of the ten tribes, the metropolis of the kingdom of Israel, and the residence of its kings. The kings of Israel adorned and fortified it; Ahab built a house of ivory in it, 1Kgs 22:39; the kings of Syria had magazines or storehouses in it, for the purpose of commerce; see 1Kgs 20:34. And it appears to have been a place of considerable importance and great strength.

Samaria endured several sieges; Ben-hadad king of Syria, besieged it twice, 1Kgs 20:1, etc.; and it cost Shalmaneser a siege of three years to reduce it, 2Kgs 17:6, etc. After the death of Alexander the Great, it became the property of the kings of Egypt; but Antiochus the Great took it from the Egyptians; and it continued in the possession of the kings of Syria till the Asmoneans took and razed it to the very foundation. Gabinius, pro-consul of Syria, partially rebuilt it, and called it Gabiniana. Herod the Great restored it to its ancient splendor, and placed in it a colony of six thousand men, and gave it the name of Sebaste, in honor of Augustus. It is now a place of little consequence.

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1KINGS 16: 25 Omri did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and dealt wickedly above all who were before him.

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Verse 25

Did worse than all - before him - Omri was,

1. An idolater in principle;
  2. An idolater in practice;
  3. He led the people to idolatry by precept and example; and, which was that in which he did worse than all before him,
  4. He made statutes in favor of idolatry, and obliged the people by law to commit it. See Mic 6:16, where this seems to be intended: For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab.
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1KINGS 16: 26 For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sins with which he made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities.

1KINGS 16: 27 Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he showed, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

1KINGS 16: 28 So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria; and Ahab his son reigned in his place.

1KINGS 16: 29 In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years.

1KINGS 16: 30 Ahab the son of Omri did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him.

1KINGS 16: 31 As if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

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Verse 31

He took to wife Jezebel - This was the head and chief of his offending; he took to wife, not only a heathen, but one whose hostility to the true religion was well known, and carried to the utmost extent.

1. She was the idolatrous daughter of an idolatrous king;
2. She practiced it openly;
3. She not only countenanced it in others, but protected it, and gave its partisans honors and rewards;
4. She used every means to persecute the true religion;

5. She was hideously cruel, and put to death the prophets and priests of God;

6. And all this she did with the most zealous perseverance and relentless cruelty.

Notwithstanding Ahab had built a temple, and made an altar for Baal, and set up the worship of Asherah, the Sidonian Venus, which we, 1Kgs 16:33, have transformed into a grove; yet so well known was the hostility of Jezebel to all good, that his marrying her was esteemed the highest pitch of vice, and an act the most provoking to God, and destructive to the prosperity of the kingdom.

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1KINGS 16: 32 He reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.

1KINGS 16: 33 Ahab made the Asherah; and Ahab did yet more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

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#### Verse 33

Ahab made a grove - אֲשֵׁרָה Asherah, Astarte, or Venus; what the Syriac calls an idol, and the Arabic, a tall tree; probably meaning, by the last, an image of Priapus, the obscene keeper of groves, orchards, and gardens.

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1KINGS 16: 34 In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho: he laid its foundation with the loss of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates with the loss of his youngest son Segub, according to the LORD's word, which he spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.

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#### Verse 34

Did Hiel the Beth-elite build Jericho - I wish the reader to refer to my note on Jos 6:26, for a general view of this subject. I shall add a few observations. Joshua's curse is well known: "Cursed be the man before the Lord that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho; he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born; and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it," Jos 6:26. This is the curse, but the meaning of its terms is not very obvious. Let us see how this is to be understood from the manner in which it was accomplished. "In his days did Hiel the Beth-elite build Jericho; he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub; according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun." This prediction was delivered upwards of five hundred years before the event; and though it was most circumstantially fulfilled, yet we know not the precise meaning of some of the terms used in the original execration, and in this place, where its fulfillment is mentioned. There are three opinions on the words, lay the foundation in his first-born, and set up the gates in his youngest son.

1. It is thought that when he laid the foundation of the city, his eldest son, the hope of his family, died by the hand and judgment of God, and that all his children died in succession; so that when the doors were ready to be hung, his youngest and last child died, and thus, instead of securing himself a name, his whole family became extinct.

2. These expressions signify only great delay in the building; that he who should undertake it should spend nearly his whole life in it; all the time in which he was capable of procreating children; in a

word, that if a man laid the foundation when his first-born came into the world, his youngest and last son should be born before the walls should be in readiness to admit the gates to be set up in them; and that the expression is of the proverbial kind, intimating greatly protracted labor, occasioned by multitudinous hinderances and delays.

3. That he who rebuilt this city should, in laying the foundation, slay or sacrifice his firstborn, in order to consecrate it, and secure the assistance of the objects of his idolatrous worship; and should slay his youngest at the completion of the work, as a gratitude-offering for the assistance received. This latter opinion seems to be countenanced by the Chaldee, which represents Hiel as slaying his first-born Abiram, and his youngest son Segub.

But who was Hiel the Beth-elite? The Chaldee calls him Hiel of Beth-mome, or the Beth-momite; the Vulgate, Hiel of Beth-el; the Septuagint, Hiel the Baithelite; the Syriac represents Ahab as the builder: "Also in his days did Ahab build Jericho, the place of execration;" the Arabic, "Also in his days did Hiel build the house of idols - to wit, Jericho." The MSS. give us no help. None of these versions, the Chaldee excepted, intimates that the children were either slain or died; which circumstance seems to strengthen the opinion, that the passage is to be understood of delays and hinderances. Add to this, Why should the innocent children of Hiel suffer for their father's presumption? And is it likely that, if Hiel lost his first-born when he laid the foundation, he would have proceeded under this evidence of the Divine displeasure, and at the risk of losing his whole family? Which of these opinions is the right one, or whether any of them be correct, is more than I can pretend to state. A curse seems to rest still upon Jericho: it is not yet blotted out of the map of Palestine, but it is reduced to a miserable village, consisting of about thirty wretched cottages, and the governor's dilapidated castle; nor is there any ruin there to indicate its former splendor.